



NMC INFORMATION BULLETIN

INTERIM ENFORCEMENT OF STCW IN NEAR COASTAL DOMESTIC TRADES

This bulletin describes a new interim policy that applies to U.S. mariners serving on vessels in near coastal domestic trades on vessels of 200 or more gross register tons. Beginning February 1, 2002, the Coast Guard will defer enforcement of the requirement for these mariners to hold an STCW-95 certificate until February 1, 2003 to more effectively manage the demand for immediate issuance of STCW credentials. Even though many STCW-78 certificates are endorsed to expire on February 1, 2002, the Coast Guard will defer action on those certificates held by mariners employed in near coastal domestic trades.

CONTINUED APPLICABILITY OF STCW

Beginning February 1, 2002, all U.S. mariners applying for an upgrade of an existing credential, or issuance of a new credential, subject to the STCW-95 must meet the full requirements of the STCW-95 before a certificate will be issued. Between February 1, 2002, and February 1, 2003, any mariner renewing a credential will be issued an STCW-95 certificate if the gap-closing requirements have been met.

CREW REQUIREMENTS

Between February 1, 2002, and February 1, 2003, owners and operators of U.S. vessels in near coastal domestic trades must ensure that the mariners they employ have completed basic safety training and familiarization training in accordance with the current regulations. Those training requirements are not deferred.

SERVICE TO MARINERS

Applications for STCW-95 certificates from mariners employed on vessels engaged in foreign trade will be handled on a priority basis. Those mariners holding a limited license that intend to engage in foreign trades should present a letter from the vessel's owner or operator stating that the bearer will be employed on the vessel identified in the letter on a foreign voyage and requesting expedited issuance of the STCW-95 certificate. The mariner must have completed all of the gap-closing requirements before an STCW-95 certificate will be issued.

As of October 1, 2001, nearly 10,000 mariners still required an STCW-95 certificate. Many RECs already have extensive backlogs, and a surge of applicants seeking STCW certification would exacerbate this situation. The above policy will spread this effort over a one-year period and work in conjunction with other initiatives to ensure that all mariners are given timely services commensurate with their needs and the needs of the maritime industry. Although the Coast Guard will defer enforcement of the STCW-95 certification requirements for mariners serving on vessels in near coastal domestic trades, all mariners serving on seagoing vessels must hold the required certifications by February 1, 2003.